



# News Release

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## **State to fine owners of small Mason County water system for neglect**

**OLYMPIA** — The Washington State Department of Health intends to issue a \$17,640 penalty to the investor-owners of Ripplewood Tracts water system in Mason County. The planned fine is for violating a state directive to bring the water system into compliance with drinking water regulations.

In March, the agency directed the owners to hire a certified operator to run and maintain the system, to test the water for nitrate contamination, and to notify customers that the water system had violated state drinking water regulations. As of October 30, the owners had not complied with the directive.

The state requires public water systems to employ trained, certified operators to ensure safe operation of the water systems.

Operators routinely test the water for contaminants, including nitrate, which poses a serious health risk because it reduces the ability of red blood cells to carry oxygen. Infants and people who don't have enough stomach acids or with an inherited lack of the enzyme that converts affected red blood cells back to normal (methemoglobin reductase) are especially at risk.

The water system ownership includes Heritor Inc., a Washington corporation; and Ripplewood Utilities, Bristol Group, a Washington corporation. The registered office for the water system is 843 S. 212th St., Suite 105, Kent.

The agency issued a \$22,680 penalty against the same investor group for violating state drinking water regulations in its operation of the Green Mountain Acres water system in Kitsap County. The penalty, issued Feb. 13, 2014, is under appeal, and negotiations are under way to transfer ownership of that system to Kitsap Public Utility District #1.

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“We hold water system owners and operators to very strict standards because of the role they play in protecting public health,” said Clark Halvorson, director of the agency’s Office of Drinking Water. “We’d rather work with owners to find solutions than penalize them, but when they shirk their responsibility, we have little choice but to issue financial penalties.”

The owners filed an appeal on October 16. The penalty is suspended until the appeal is resolved.

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